1: Turnbull E-4,5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4 Mbuti

[P.152-A]

102
114
131
133

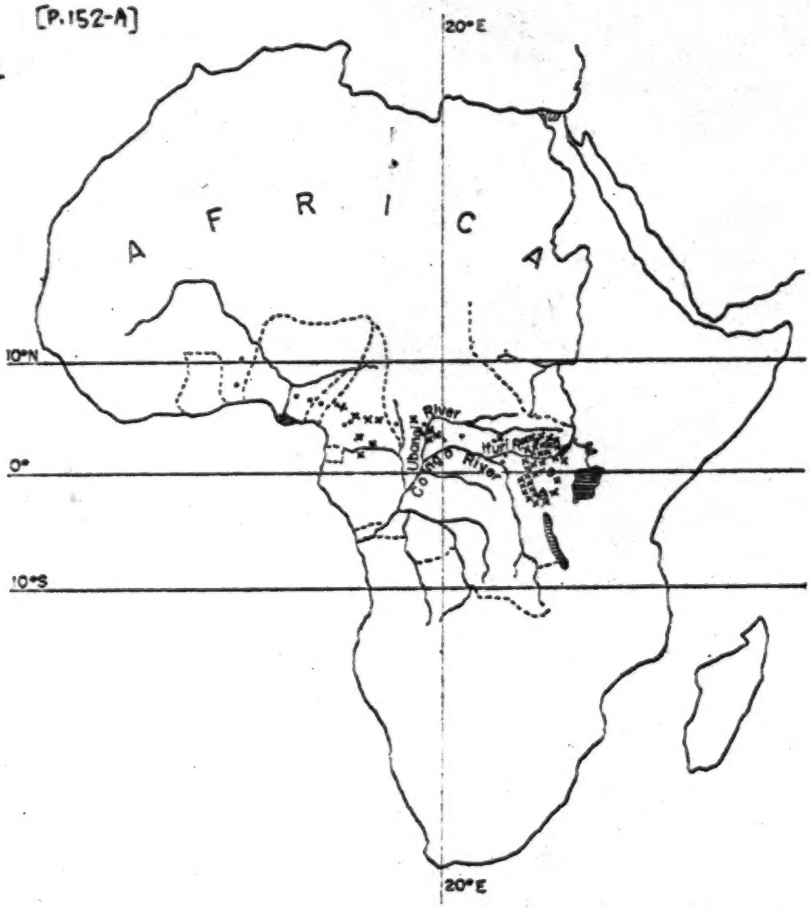



FIG. 1. Map showing extent of personal knowledge of Pygmy groups according to accounts heard *in situ* or through personal contact made during the author's 1957–1958 field trip, not covering the central and southern Congo. Circles indicate accounts of Pygmy or Pygmoid hunting bands; crosses, actual contact.

1: Turnbull E-4.5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4 Mbuti
101
102
• 131
133

[P. 153-A]

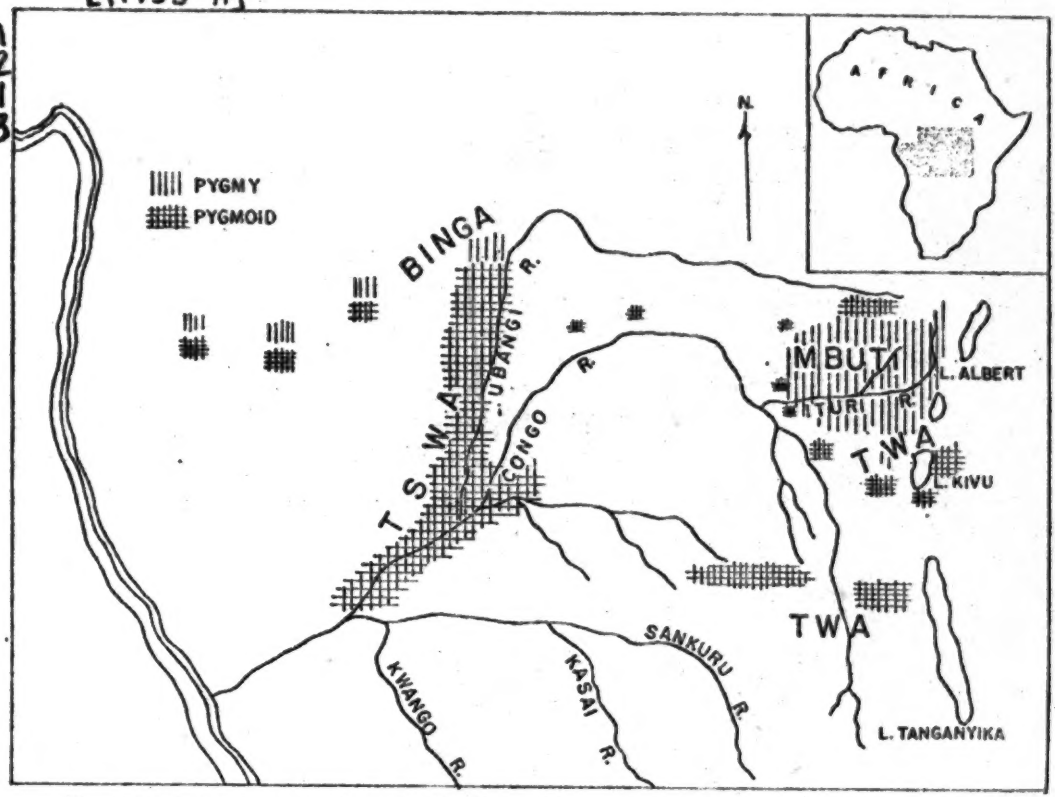



FIG. 2. Map showing approximate distribution of Pygmy and Pygmoid groups in central Africa.

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

114 the *molimo*.[1] I was particularly fortunate in ob-
128 taining the material I did, and I include it be-
cause it helps to fill out the most detailed body of facts available on any single Pygmy hunting band. The fact that all this material does deal with a single band (or is used only in so far as it does) perhaps excuses the somewhat haphazard way in which it has been amassed. Obviously a single field study by one trained anthropologist would be preferable, but it is not available. Inclusion here of the notes on my 1957–1958 field trip would create an imbalance. As it is, the material is used only in the presentation of facts, and there is no reason to doubt their authenticity. If there is any fault in this joint source on the Epulu Mbuti, it is this possible fault of omission rather than any of commission.

101 The area that this band of Pygmies hunts
• 131 lies to the north of the Epulu River and west of
621

[1] Much confusion arises through common and loose usage of the term *lusumba* among all villagers of the area. The *lusumba*, also *esumba*, seems to originate as an Ngwana magical ceremony. This is distinct from both the Bira *molimo* and the *molimo* of the Mbuti, although the terms are often used interchangeably by villagers.

[192]

[P. 158- B]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[P 158-C]

the River Nduye (Fig. 3). The band is a relatively large one and shows some interesting tendencies toward fission. It did not always move as a single hunting unit. Sometimes a part of the band would be several days' journey off in the forest, while the rest remained at the village named Camp Putnam. Mrs. Putnam frequently visited the hunting band at its various camps, when of latter years Patrick Putnam was more or less entirely confined by his illness to the village.

Linguistically the band falls into Schebesta's Sua category, using KiBira for the most part as their camp language. They also use a great many KiLese words, however, and the local Bira affirm that they frequently cannot understand what they call "KiMbuti," though they recognize it to be basically KiBira. Like the Bira villagers, these Pygmies also speak some KiNgwana, the *lingua franca* of the territory.

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

101 If the Bushmen, whose relationship to the Pygmies is highly questionable, be left aside, there are three main groups of African Pygmies —the Mbuti of the Ituri Forest, the Tswa of the western Congo and western Africa, and the Twa between Lake Kivu and Lake Tanganyika. Of these, only the first group is truly "Pygmy" according to Schebesta (1952), being under 150 cm. in stature and relatively free from intermixture with neighboring tribes. Schebesta refers to the Twa and Tswa as "Pygmoids." From all the available evidence it seems that the Ituri Mbuti alone preserve any semblance of their original nomadic life as hunters and gatherers, although little is known yet about the Pygmies of equatorial Africa.

175 131 Our earliest sources (the Sixth-Dynasty tomb at Beni Hassan, the Pompeian parietal paintings, Homer, Aristotle, and even the Mappa Mundi) all agree in placing a Pygmy population near the source of the Nile. Later sources enlarge little on this information, and the first real attempt to delimit the territory was made by Schebesta in 1929–1930.

131 The Ituri Mbuti inhabit the forested basins of the Lindi and Ituri rivers (Schebesta). The Bomokandi River forms the northern frontier. The Mbuti never move beyond the edge of the

[P. 159-B]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



forest to the east. Their southern limit is bounded by a line from the Ruwenzori, through Beni to Bafwasende. The western boundary runs north from Bafwasende to Panga and to the confluence of the Bomokandi and Uele. (See Fig. 3.) Apart from the Lindi and Ituri rivers, Schebesta says that Pygmies also inhabit the areas near the Epulu, Ngayu, Nepoko, and Poko rivers. Putnam makes no attempt to delimit Mbuti territory, but his notes show that he traveled throughout the area described by Schebesta, with the possible exception of the extreme south, and found Mbuti everywhere, away from the major rivers as well as along their banks. 131.

Schebesta makes the threefold division already mentioned, of Twa, Tswa, and Mbuti, and further subdivides the Ituri Mbuti into three major groups: the Aka to the north; Sua to the south; and Efe to the east (Fig. 3). These are linguistic groups, speaking dialects of Mangbetu, Bira, and Lese, respectively. 197 101 [619]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

betu, Bira, and Lese, respectively. Schebesta believes the Efe dialect to be the remnant of the original Pygmy language, and for this reason he considers the Efe archers to be culturally the purest of the three Mbuti groups. Costermans (1937) disagrees as to both the originality of the Efe language and the purity of Schebesta's particular Efe Mbuti. He asserts that among the Watsa-Gombari Efe, who according to Schebesta were not "true Pygmies," he found hundreds living in exactly the same manner as Schebesta's "true Pygmies." 197 101 114

Jadin (1936) considers that of Schebesta's three groups the Efe and the Sua have remained most faithful to their old way of life and finds that, on grounds of blood groups, the purest Pygmies are those who live farthest from their village neighbors, from whom they are clearly distinguishable by their biochemical index. 101 144 184

The Aka live mostly to the north of the Nepoko River, along the length of the Ituri as far east as Gombari. Thence southward, to the east of the Nduye, the Efe archers are found. The Sua roam from the Nepoko to the south side of the Ituri River, from Bomili in the west, almost to Mambasa in the east. Detailed information on the Aka is not available, though they seem to make more use of the spear than the other groups. 101 131 619 [p. 159-D]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

EP.160-A7

000 the other groups. Our main source on the Efe is
101 Schebesta, whose major field work was carried
114 out in the triangle bounded by the roads joining
128 Irumu, Mambasa, and Beni. Source material on
• 131 the Sua is almost entirely confined to a band in the area to the west of the Nduye and north of the Epulu, near the village of Camp Putnam (Fig. 3).

128 Thus the two groups available for study rep-
101 resent not only two of Schebesta's two lin-
184 guistic groups but also the two major hunting
224 techniques used by the Ituri Mbuti. The Efe are archers, while the Sua are primarily net hunters. It is probable that certain structural differences between the two groups can be accounted for by this difference in economic activity; all such differences are also related to the different degrees of symbiosis between the Pygmies and their village neighbors. What is said of these two groups should be taken to apply within these limited areas only, though it may be found that many of the facts have wider extension.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



121 In paying special attention to this relationship it was felt that the otherwise intangible value-system of the Mbuti would be more clearly revealed, leading to an understanding of the ritual relationship that appeared to exist between the Mbuti and the forest, as implied in the accounts of other observers and in my own prior experience, but nowhere made explicit.

## EXECUTION

114 101 131 Field work was undertaken between the summer of 1957 and the late winter of 1958, entering the then Belgian Congo by driving through from the West Coast, collecting as many local accounts of pygmy or pygmoid hunters and gatherers along the way as possible, for future reference. Such accounts were gathered in Dahomey, Nigeria (particularly towards the east), the Cameroons, Gabon, and throughout the Congo, but few hunting bands were encountered until well towards the Ubangi River (see Map 1). It was decided not to spend time trying to make contact, except on the far side of the Ubangi, where contact was relatively easy, and where there were also some Binga pygmies from the west bank of the river.

114 131 [144] From the Ubangi over to the Ituri it was quite obvious that, as elsewhere, true hunting bands only existed where there was substantial primary forest, and that elsewhere not only was the hunting and gathering economy defunct, but there had been so much intermarriage that one could not truly speak of a pygmy physical type any more than one could speak of a pygmy culture.

Leaving aside the forested area south of the Congo River, which I did not cover but for which pygmoid groups are reported, I found relatively isolated bands of pygmy and pygmoid hunters and gatherers to exist in the forests of the Gabon and the Cameroons, and in the Congo Republic (Brazzaville) as well as in the forested regions [101] around the Ubangi River. But by far the heaviest concentration is in the Ituri Forest, where all the pygmies recognize their unity in the name Mbuti, and where both the physical and the cultural integrity of the hunters and gatherers seems to have been best preserved.

121 There was no question that this was the right area for the major bulk of the field work, but there was some question as to which band to select for the intensive study. I eventually decided on the Epulu

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



net-hunters for a variety of reasons, their central location (see Map 2) being only one.

There were several more immediate reasons, which I give now, as the choice may be a point of some criticism:

1) I had already been among this band on two prior occasions, and had established with them a most friendly relationship that I knew would guarantee me immediate access to their forest hunting camps. Although I was known among other bands, there did not exist the same degree of intimacy and trust, and the Mbuti are by nature reserved and suspicious when faced with the prospect of having a stranger in their forest camps.

2) I was also well known to the Epulu villagers, and could anticipate the need for understanding and tolerance from this direction.

3) Father Schebesta (1957) had previously attacked my discussion of the significance of the music and ceremonial (Turnbull, 1955, 1957[1]) by saying that this same band was particularly acculturated and therefore not representative.[1] As the whole point of my argument was the superficiality of the acculturation, and granting that this band had all the appearances of gross acculturation, this seemed like an excellent opportunity for testing a hypothesis that I felt to be valid, and that I also suspected to have far deeper significance in the total Mbuti social structure than I at present recognized.

4) In selecting a net-hunting band I would at least be adding to Schebesta's general ethnographic description, which was mostly concerned with the archers, rather than be duplicating it.

5) Because of its central location I would be able to move relatively rapidly to other areas in the forest if the occasion demanded, and when in other areas I would still be able to stay within a few days' reach of the Epulu band, in case I needed to return. Also because of its central location, there seemed to be some possibility of establishing contact not only with other net-hunting bands, but also possibly with archer bands, in the normal course of the year's migrations.

6) The continued existence of Camp Putnam, on the Epulu River, offered me a base where I could keep essential supplies in safety, and where I would not alienate myself from the villagers with whom I would eventually have to work by having to stay at a government rest-house or with other Europeans.

[1] For a further clarification of Schebesta's attitude, see my article on the *nkumbi* initiation (Turnbull, 1957), his rejoinder and subsequent recantation (Schebesta, 1958, 1963).

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



pure hunting and gathering economy at work not only side by side with, but in opposition to, a cultivation economy. With the pygmoid Twa and Tswa, and possibly only excepting a few small groups in the Gabon and among the Ubangi Binga pygmies, the rest of the population of pygmy hunters and gatherers has become largely dependent for food upon cultivation, either by adopting it themselves or by entering into symbiosis with neighboring village farmers. The Mbuti solution to the contact situation is very different, and so it is in its contemporary context that we study it; any light the study may throw on an earlier form of pygmy society is incidental.

The habitat of the Mbuti is the Ituri Forest. This is a primary rain forest that runs across the equator from the fringes of the Saharan desert, in the north, into the Kivu mountains, in the south. To the east it is bounded clearly by a succession of lakes (Lake Albert, Lake Edward and Lake Kivu) but to the west the boundary is less definable, the forest thinning out as it approaches the Congo River's commercial centers. Effectively, the Mbuti occupy only the dense forest where the migration of game and the nature of vegetation have alike been virtually unaffected by outside influences. Their forest home, some 50,000 square miles in extent, is traversed by a number of roads built, for the most part, since the 1930's, but the purpose of the roads has been merely for transport and has not led to any significant exploitation of the forest, which in most places comes right to the very edge of the roadway (see Map 4).[1]

There are a number of significant features concerning the forest that have to be taken into account. In general it is considered as generous and friendly from the point of view of the Mbuti hunters and gatherers, and as niggardly and hostile from the point of view of the villager cultivators.

For example, the forest is, in most places, gently undulating, though even the mountainous sections in the east and in the south are as thickly wooded at their highest points as at the lowest. In all the territory to the north of the Kivu mountains the average height above sea level is somewhere around a thousand meters. This height, together with the over-all denseness of the forest, and an almost daily rainfall that averages from 70 to 80 inches per year, makes the temperatures within the forest remain remarkably constant and agreeable, seldom departing far from either side of 80° F., never below 70° or above 90°. The relative humidity is fairly constant at 95 per cent.

[1] [see page 319 -- Analyst]

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[P. 93]

CHAPTER 8

# The Band

## TERRITORY

Before we can begin to understand what the Mbuti band is, we have to understand the notion of territory, which is effectively the only concept through which the band can be defined. Insofar as the band is the largest effective political unit, so the widest territorial boundaries that are recognized are those separating each band from the others. As will be seen, there is a current tendency for all Mbuti bands to recognize a loose unity to bind them in common opposition to the villagers, and in this context they will define a correspondingly wider territory, the forest, in which the villagers are regarded as trespassers. At the other end of the scale, the nuclear family has no territorial claims except those held jointly with other families of the same band. An individual may stake his claim to a tree that he knows or believes will yield honey, or to one that promises to provide good bark for making into cloth. A common way of showing that the tree is claimed is by tying a vine around the trunk at shoulder height.

A claim thus made by no means gives the individual or his family exclusive ownership of the tree or exclusive rights to its produce, however. It merely conveys the right for that individual to have the first opportunity for collecting the honey or for cutting the bark. When the honey is collected or the bark cut, it is done collectively and the claimant is subject to all the usual rules governing the sharing of forest produce. He will have precedence of choice and his share will be larger. If he is not on hand when the honey is ready, however, and if he does not signify his intention to come to claim it, his right is forfeited. It may be seen that the advantage accruing from this slight departure from the norm of joint band ownership of the territory and its produce is in no way great enough to detract from the central value of communal territory, but at the same time it is sufficiently

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



62 great to provide some incentive for individual effort and, much more
423 important, it also provides some incentive for a wandering member
• 13 of a band to return to his home territory at least once a year, for the honey season.[1]

The territory of any band is always ample for its needs. That is perhaps the safest way of defining the size of band territory. Never, in any part of the forest, have I come across any complaint of the insufficiency of a hunting territory, in terms of either size or produce. Nor are there sufficient instances of trespass to indicate that any band suffers from inadequate natural resources. In every case that I have investigated the band has been able to define its boundaries by citing rivers, streams, mountain ridges, ravines, caves, or other locally well-
13 known natural landmarks. These boundaries generally extend one
62 day's march in one direction, three days' march in the other. The
423 shorter base is invariably parallel to the line, a trail or road, connect-
484 ing two villages, though it may well overlap it. A "day's march" is
487 the way the Mbuti generally define distance, and in practice this
[822] means that the first day in from the base line is the longest distance, extending perhaps as far as thirty miles. Beyond this the territory is less intensively traveled, the trails are more difficult to follow, and the third day in may represent only ten or fifteen miles. The base line, similarly, is comparatively short, being perhaps the least hunted as it is the closest to the village. Also, as the forest in this area will have been penetrated by villagers in search of building materials, it is generally much more difficult to traverse than the virgin forest a mile or so further in.

In using this measure of time and distance, the Mbuti do not think of how far a single hunter could travel in a day, but rather how far the whole band could travel, as if shifting camp. A single man could travel almost twice the distance. This is a small point, but serves as an indication of the way in which the Mbuti see the world around them, in terms of the potentiality of the whole band.

131 The territory of the Epulu band (Map 6)[A] was defined by a series
133 of rivers: the Harama, the Itoro, and the Epulu to the northeast, the east and the south, and by the small Nepussi and a series of hills and caves to the west. As usual, the innermost boundary was the least

[1] This also seems to be the season when bark-cloth manufacture is at its height, perhaps largely because more time is available during this season. But bark cloth is made throughout the year, and fresh sources of the best barks are always eagerly sought and claimed.

[A] [see page 321 -- Analyst]

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



clearly defined, opening northward into a large central area unclaimed by anyone.

The topography of the Epulu territory is similar to that of most other bands, though without the steep, mountainous ridges that occur slightly further east. The ground is gently undulating, as thickly forested on the hilltops as in the valleys, though the vegetation is much denser along the banks of streams and rivers. It is almost impossible to walk more than a few hundred yards without having to cross a small stream, and after a particularly violent and prolonged rainfall there are areas that become temporarily flooded and the larger streams may become uncrossable torrents. But normally there is little difficulty in traveling from one extreme of the area to another. There are no swamps, the ground is clear of the tangled undergrowth that characterizes old plantation sites, and all but the largest streams are either shallow enough, in places, to be forded or are bridged at intervals by fallen trees. Nowhere do the Mbuti need to build bridges, and nowhere do they do so except in the village context.[2] It is a simple fact that rivers that are too wide to be bridged by a fallen tree are relatively far and few between, and therefore form convenient natural boundaries. There is neither the desire nor the need to cross such rivers. A certain mistrust of large bodies of water strengthens the efficacy of rivers as boundaries, just as the few superstitions to be found among the Mbuti mostly relate to ravines, caves, streams or hills that form other boundaries.

The abundance of game and vegetable food may be taken for

[2] The famous "pygmy" bridge and the spectacular technique of crossing a river by swinging on a vine from one side to the other were taught to the Mbuti, not without difficulty, by an enterprising movie-maker. Patrick Putnam was asked to assist as interpreter, but refused. His first wife, however, went to watch the proceedings. The same group of pygmies retained some knowledge of the technique, and obligingly repeated the act for subsequent "documentary" film units. They are the only group with the knowledge, though they are now less proficient. A more recent movie-maker had to sling a wire hawser across the river and suspend the vine swing from its midpoint. A simple mathematical calculation will reveal the impossibility of the swinging technique, even disregarding the area behind the swing that would have to be cleared, a task in itself beyond Mbuti technology. Assuming the fulcrum is over one bank, and the branches into which the pygmy is to swing are directly over the far bank (a generous assumption), and assuming that the pygmy can be drawn back far enough to swing up to a 45-degree angle at the far end of his swing, the maximum width that can be crossed is three-quarters of the height of the swing. In practical experiment among the Mbuti, I found that effectively half the height of the swing was the maximum horizontal distance that could be so traversed. This would mean that to cross a river a mere hundred yards in width, the fulcrum would have to be some 600 feet up, demanding a tree approaching the height of the Eiffel Tower. Conversely, a swing of the maximum normally practicable length of 60 feet would enable a pygmy to span a stream a mere 30 feet across. Pygmies generally have rather more sense, in such matters, than movie-makers.

The abundance of game and vegetable food may be taken for granted in any part of the forest, except possibly that small triangle bounded by the three roads joining the administrative centers of Mambasa, Irumu and Beni (Map 4),[1] where the roads and the heavy concentration of foreign settlements, coffee plantations, hospitals, missions and mines have considerably affected the natural resources and the natural patterns of game migration. There is no economic need for trespass. Each territory is large enough for a band to roam within it for year after year, never twice occupying the same camp site, never exhausting its supplies of food or the materials needed for shelter and clothing and the rest of the minimal Mbuti material culture.

All of which is not to say that boundaries are not crossed. They are crossed, either when hunters commit trespass or when individuals or families visit relatives in other bands. In the case of trespass, a band of hunters may pursue game across a boundary stream, particularly if it is one of the more prized animals. An elephant would almost certainly be pursued, but it is understood that the band whose territory is so violated has certain rights to the spoils. Such trespass is considered excusable under these conditions. Generally, however, a band will never hunt near its boundaries if the neighboring band is in the vicinity of the same boundary.

The only cases of uncondoned trespass known to me are rare instances when a band has found itself short of honey during the brief honey season, and has invaded its neighbor's territory and actually set up temporary camp there. This was considered inexcusable only because permission was not first sought.

If trespass is rare, boundaries are being crossed frequently for the approved purpose of visiting relatives, consanguineal or affinal. Individuals or whole families sometimes wander in this way until they are several territories distant from their home territory. By "home territory" an Mbuti would mean the territory in which he most habitually hunted, and in which he has established certain claims to honey or bark trees. He would be unlikely to attempt to define it in terms of clan or lineage concepts; that is, he would refer to the territory rather than to the band. This habitual exchange of visits is, in fact, the major social communication that exists between one band and another, but it also has a secondary economic significance: a band that becomes too large for convenience may split, a part of it going to join another band that has perhaps fallen below the optimum economic size. The major purpose of interband visits is the extension

[1] [see page 319 -- Analyst]

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



of the social horizon, particularly necessary in view of the preferred territorial exogamy. When the Mbuti say that they like to "marry far," they think primarily in terms of spatial distance, on the assumption that this will provide the necessary kinship distance. Thus territory is used, in the absence of a formalized kinship system, to express and maintain the necessary degree of exogamy. Territory is also used as the concept by which men and women define "home," and it is through territorial membership that any individual has such rights as he has. Above all, it is the territory which has bounds, not the band.

## COMPOSITION

Both archer and net-hunter bands exhibit the greatest complexity in composition, particularly when large, but also sometimes even when fragmented into the smallest segments. The Epulu band, over the course of a year, was made up of twenty-seven patrilineages sharing seven totems, although the largest single camp contained only twenty-six family huts. Of these twenty-seven lineages, each of which has a name (possibly in imitation of village clan names) and a totem, only two are divided into more than one totemic group: the Puemi respect the leopard or the chimpanzee, the Bokelé respect the leopard or the buffalo or a rare antelope. The Puemi and the Bokelé alone, then, may be considered as clans, and even they only with reservation, for though each totemic group of the Bokelé (or the Puemi) claims to be related to the other through a distant ancestor, the ancestor remains unnamed and is never invoked, and it is admitted that intermarriage might take place. There is no record of such intermarriage, and certainly the lineage is exogamous. In the accompanying plans these totemic subgroups, then, are considered and represented as separate lineages.

For three large camps (over twenty huts[3]) made by the Epulu band within a twelve-month period, the following is the breakdown, giving the number of patrilineages and lineage totems represented in each camp, counting the husband, widower or rare bachelor hut-owner on the one hand, the wife or widow on the other, and counting only those living and present at the time:

[3] A hut is normally occupied by a nuclear family, but may sometimes be occupied only by a bachelor, widower or widow. Also, rarely, a married son and his wife may stay temporarily in the hut of either parents (more likely the parents of the son). By and large, however, a hut represents an economic unit owning no more than one net.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



Because of the rarity of ritual performances there is one which should be mentioned here, though it seems unique and known only to net-hunters as far as I could ascertain. The ritual involves the building of a fire, with much greater care and concern than the hunting fire or the *molimo* fire, and it is believed specifically that the correct performance of this ritual will lead the Mbuti to honey and/or bring the bees, and their honey, closer to the Mbuti. A full description is given in the section on religion and magic (pp. 231–33). Here it need only be said that the preparations, including the digging of small trenches for water and the use of special woods and leaves, are designed to give the maximum amount of smoke. The lighting of the fire is accompanied by blowing on the *madé*[4] (efe: *segbe*) whistles, through which water is first poured.

All being taken into consideration, the relative lack of magic or ritual associated with food quest, the lack of interest shown in certain readily available forms of food supply such as fish, and the lack of food taboos all confirm the abundance of forest foods and the adequacy of Mbuti technology. This is important in considering the over-all economic system.

## ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF TERRITORY

While the environment does not, through areas of shortage or abundance, determine the location of hunting bands, it does provide natural boundaries which form convenient borders between each hunting band. The total territory is more than ample for the total population, and the even distribution of game and vegetable foods means that there are no preferential areas that might make for rivalry between one band and the next. There is, in any case, a safety factor in that the bands are arranged side by side, in several vast circles, in the center of each of which the boundaries are so loosely drawn that there is effectively a no-man's-land, in which anyone may hunt and where bands occasionally, though rarely, may come in contact with each other.

The only territory to be considered, then, is that of the individual hunting band. This is again, in all cases except possibly the area

[4] The *madé* is a conical pipe, open at both ends, made of two hollowed-out cross-sections cut lengthwise, bound together either by *nkusu* twine or by strips of vine. The pouring of water, which is comparable to the pouring of water through the *molimo* trumpet (see Chapter 14), may have ritual significance, but is explained invariably and unhesitatingly as being necessary simply to get a better sound. It swells the wood and binds the sections closer to each other.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



131 621 628 bounded by Beni, Mambasa, and Irumu, more than sufficient for the economic needs of any band, however large. The size of the band is determined more by hunting technology than by territorial food-producing capacity, but each territory does provide, within itself, a means of regulating the internal movement of the band or its subsections.

621 224 166 131 Game, while not migratory in the wider sense, nonetheless tends to move about from one part of the forest to another nearby part, as it temporarily exhausts one area of supply after another. The game itself is in this respect comparable to the band, which similarly is forced to move, not only as it gathers out an area but also as it hunts it out. The same topographical barriers that provide natural boundaries to the Mbuti also often provide natural boundaries to the game, and so in any one hunting territory there is a definite pattern to the movement of both Mbuti and game, the one following the other. The Mbuti may break the pattern either by eating village foods or by abandoning one section of their territory for another, for there may be several "game territories" within one hunting territory.

621 131 There are then general economic aspects of territory that influence the movement and division of the hunting band, but they in no way compel it into one specific pattern or another. Far more important is the simple fact of the ample economic self-sufficiency of each hunting territory, and the fact that this is a factor recognized, appreciated and utilized by the Mbuti.

## 628 224 131 ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN HUNTING BANDS

It is only extremely rarely that one band has any kind of economic relationship with its neighbors, and the nature of the relationship depends entirely on the context. As already observed, while there is a recognized custom of not crossing into another band's territory, this may be done if that band is nowhere in the vicinity. The likelihood of this happening depends on the nature of the boundary (how easily it may be traversed) and the nature of the quarry. It is unlikely that any but the most desirable game would be pursued. If such game is caught, however, then a share of it is due to the band in whose territory it was killed. While it would be unusual for one band to inform another of such good fortune, if discovered there is no hesitation at sharing in the prescribed way.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



The movement of bees seems to be somewhat less even than that of game in the Ituri Forest, and it sometimes happens during the honey season that one hunting territory may have a glut of honey while a neighboring territory has a scarcity. In that case the less fortunate band will either poach, and hope not to get caught and so have to share, or else it will ask permission to camp on foreign territory. In the latter case there will probably be an exchange of residents between the two bands, the host band thus being able to insure its rights. (As often as not, due to the composite nature of the bands, the encroaching band will have among its female or even its male members a relative, if not an original member, of the resident band. However, the loyalty of such individuals is divided, and is generally given to their present hunting band; otherwise undiscovered poaching would be impossible.)

The camps are generally as far apart as possible, unless the encroaching band is small, or a mere subsection that is tentatively seeking a re-alignment with the resident band. Similarly with hunting, joint hunting camps are exceptional, and to my own knowledge occur only if there is a common desire to hunt elephants which may be in one or both territories. The purpose of such joint hunts generally involves village economics, in particular the supply of ivory to the villagers. In itself elephant-hunting demands only a handful of men at the most, and more than one dead elephant would be an *embarras de richesses*, to say the least.

It is not surprising, then, that there are no institutionalized means of regulating economic relationships between bands. Such co-operation as does occur is completely outside the normal economic frame of reference. There is certainly no exchange of goods or food between bands, except insofar as a visiting family generally brings with it some meat, honey, nuts or mushrooms to share with their hosts. Each territory not only provides a sufficiency of food but an equally ample sufficiency of all the other material necessities of life.

The only true economic relationship that persists between bands is concerned with maintaining each territorial band at its optimum economic strength of composition. The overenlargement of one band and the diminution of another leads to a relocation of some of the families of the larger band in the territory of the smaller. Owing to the constant flux in composition, however, this is only a temporary relationship between two temporary populations, and does not in-

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



628 582 583 porarily, and is considerably easier to arrange than a reluctant marriage. It can be seen, then, that the kinds of relationship existing between bands for the regulation of marriage are necessarily flexible. 628 581 594 182 More important, marriage between bands provides a formal relationship between the nuclear families concerned and so provides also a basis for interfamilial exchange between those bands. To have such an exchange relationship, on a familial level, is of much more importance than wider political ties to a band which only on the rarest of occasions may need to act in concert, as a band, with the other band.

621 224 • 131 *Trespass*

Each hunting territory being economically self-sufficient, there is generally no need for economic cooperation. Boundaries are frequently natural features that restrict effectively the movement of both the hunters and the game, so trespass is also restricted. However, if following especially prized game, hunters will follow it across such boundaries with little or no hesitation. It is even said that if a band's territory is exceptionally unproductive, the band may move into a corner of its neighbor's territory, the furthest removed from wherever that band is camped at the time.

628 224 It is understood that in the case of pursuit of quarry a portion of the game will be sent to the resident band. It is equally understood that, if moving into someone else's territory, they should be notified and their permission sought. If either of these provisions is not maintained it may lead to friction, and a delegation of hunters from the offended band will visit the others in their camp, perhaps even staying with them for a few days. The question of who forms such a delegation is again largely an economic matter, for the members have to be drawn from the hunters, and the home band will obviously be unwilling to decrease its hunting efficiency to any significant extent. There is the stated possibility of a resort to fighting with wooden clubs; in one instance a few young hotheads suggested using spears, but this appeared to be more a figure of speech to indicate extreme anger, and was promptly rejected by the older hunters. I have, in any case, come across not a solitary instance of such open hostilities taking place between two bands. The visiting hunters are received with respect, and the trespassing hunters generally say that they intend to fulfill their obligations and, as a sign of good faith, offer to send out a hunt so their visitors can bring meat back to their band. If the host

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



value (though an individual generally knows and therefore feels at home in one territory more than in others) so much as a group value. The stated concern of the Mbuti is not to perpetuate lineage but to perpetuate the band, and bands are not only defined but named by territory. Individual camps are given specific names according to their locality. *Apa toangbe* is the camp under the *toangbe* trees; *apa* Lelo is the camp by the Lelo River, and so forth. It is significant that when referring to another band it is generally referred to by its current camp name, or the last camp name known, rather than by the more general name by which its whole hunting territory is known. This implies a recognition of the changeability of the composition of the band, and an emphasis on what the band is at any given moment, defined by the particular part of its territory it is hunting at the moment.

Practical considerations of territory are that birth in a territory conveys the right to hunt with that band throughout life, and it generally conveys a sentimental attachment to the territory that may well act as a stabilizing factor. Cognatic or affinal relationships may be utilized to acquire the right to hunt in other territories, but one then becomes a member, if temporary, of the band in which one is hunting.[4] But it is when one widens the concept of territory, so that it implies more than a mere area defined by boundaries, that the notion acquires its most fundamental importance. As a definable area it is of economic and political significance in providing the framework within which hunting by different bands can take place without danger of shortage or need for conflict; it is also of social significance in providing a symbol of band unity, and the promise of continuity. But the term used by the Mbuti for territory is the same word used for forest, *ndura*. Regarded in this light, territory assumes vastly added significance.

When an Mbuti says "This is our forest" (*"Nde ndura ndasu"*), he may be defining the territory of the band in which he is a current member, or he may be defining the Mbuti as against the villagers. Alternatively, if in the honey season among the net-hunters, he may be defining the territory in which his particular subsection of the band

[4] This again is an example of different degrees of kin relationship being recognized but not made explicit, because explicit recognition would alter the distance between the individuals and so disturb the *apua'i* relationship. Once in the new camp, the visitor is assimilated into the age-level system of that band regardless of the nature of his kin relationships. In giving his reasons for making the visit, either to his own band or to the band he is visiting, an Mbuti will not spell out the relationship but will most likely use the personal name, coupled perhaps with the appropriate generational term. The term alone would plainly not indicate clearly enough whom he was going to visit.

the elders is to restore *ekimi*, or quietness, and also, following their alternate generation, to play and sing, if in a somewhat different manner. The elders may also flirt.

Above all, each age level has its own responsibility in the total band economy.

3. TERRITORY is the principle by which the band, divided horizontally by age, sees its unity vertically, through all four generational levels. Territory, represented by the hearth, recognizes the divisions of the band from the nuclear family, represented by the family hearth, to the four age levels, represented by the different hearths at the *kumamolimo*, for youths, hunters and elders (children remaining by the family hearths). Territory, represented by an area enclosed by recognizable boundaries, defines and is the symbol of unity of the band. In its widest extension, the forest itself, territory forms the basis for the unity of all Mbuti in their common opposition to the village world. The village world is frequently referred to as *indenji aku*, or in the lingua franca, KiNgwana, as *inchi ingina*—directly translated as "another territory." Each band has its own *indenji*, and intermarriage between noncontiguous bands is preferred because of the rights it conveys, each to the other's territory. The Mbuti themselves say it is good to have relatives (friends) in many camps, for then one never "walks emptily" (*tamba bulé*). One of the great *molimo* songs is "*me tamba bulé*"—"I am walking emptily." The importance lies not in the initial or future residence of the married couple, but in the exchange relationship established by their marriage, enabling individuals or families of each band to exchange visits with members of the other, never having to "walk emptily."

For the Mbuti territory in its widest aspect, as the forest, also represents the spiritual source of their entire being, and effectively operates as the ultimate sanction of social behavior.

4. NOISE, or *akami*, is another element of structural significance, and must be considered in relation to its counterpart, *ekimi*—quiet. Noise is recognized as having considerable practical significance, such as its effect in scaring away animals. This can be desirable or undesirable, depending on the situation, and so can noise be desirable or otherwise. Ultimately, however, noise kills, and so generally is to be avoided. It may be used in times of danger or crisis for protective purposes, and apart from shouting to frighten away wild animals while on the trail, the Mbuti also whistle to stop all human sound, in

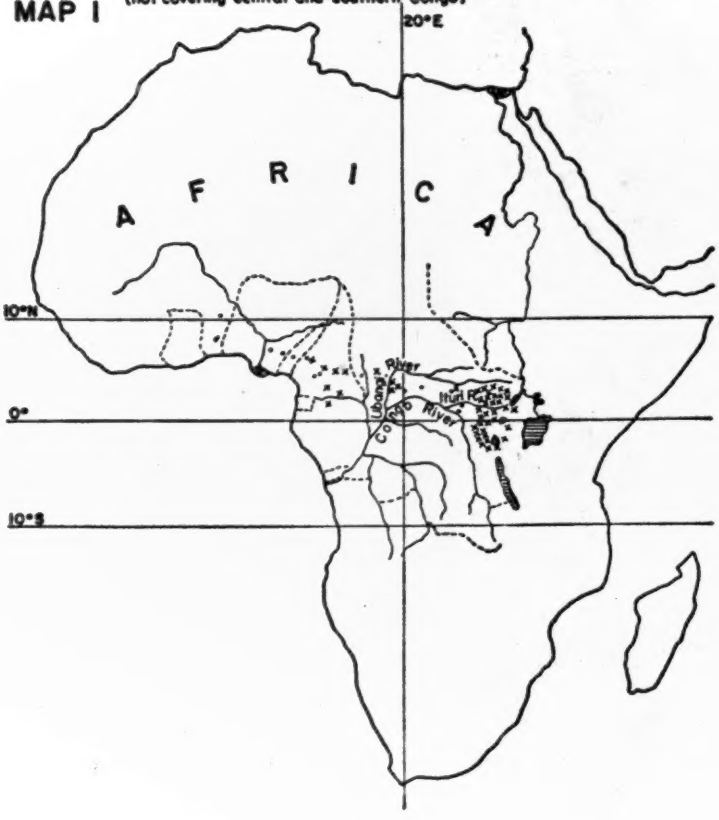
2: Tumbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



102
114
13
133

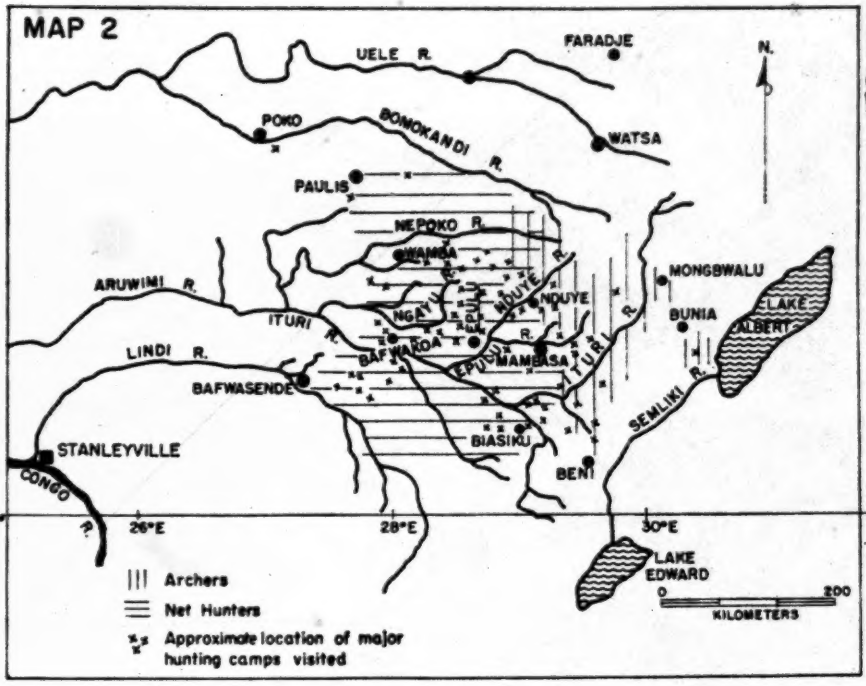
Extent of personal knowledge of pygmy groups according to accounts heard in situ and personal contact made during 1957/8 field trip (not covering central and southern Congo)

MAP I



2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti





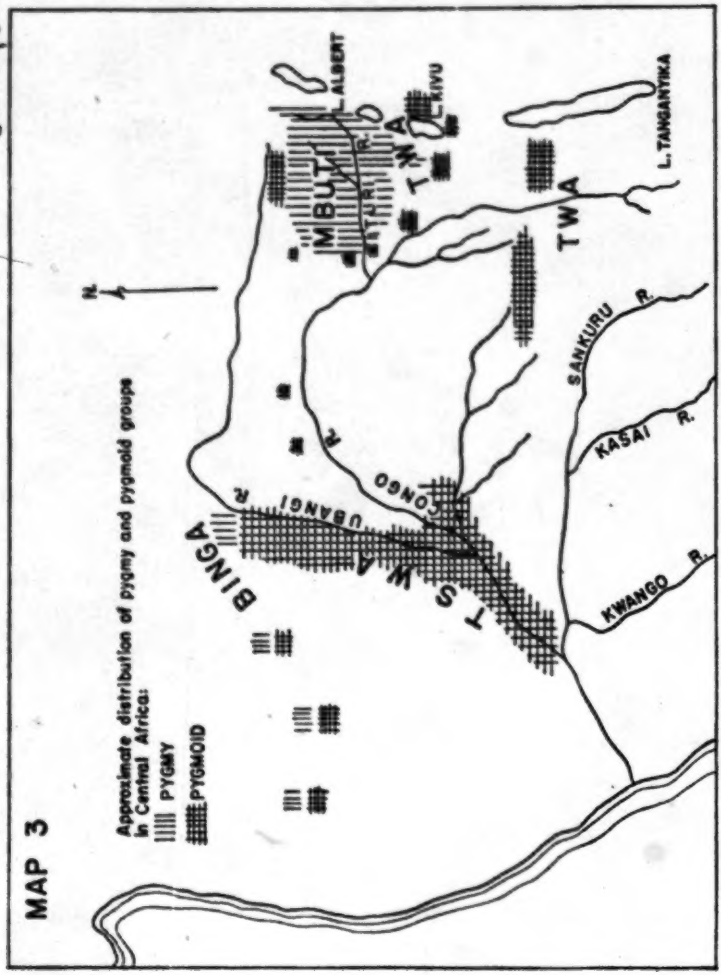

102
114
131
133

*Approximate location of hunting bands visited in the Ituri.*

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



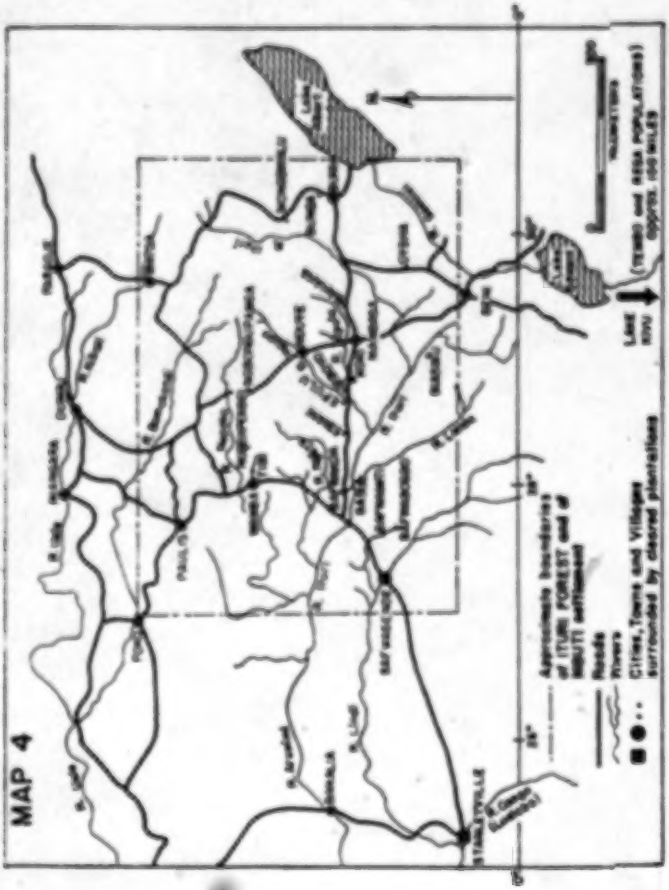
102
101
131
133



2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 PO4 Pygmies PO4
Mbuti



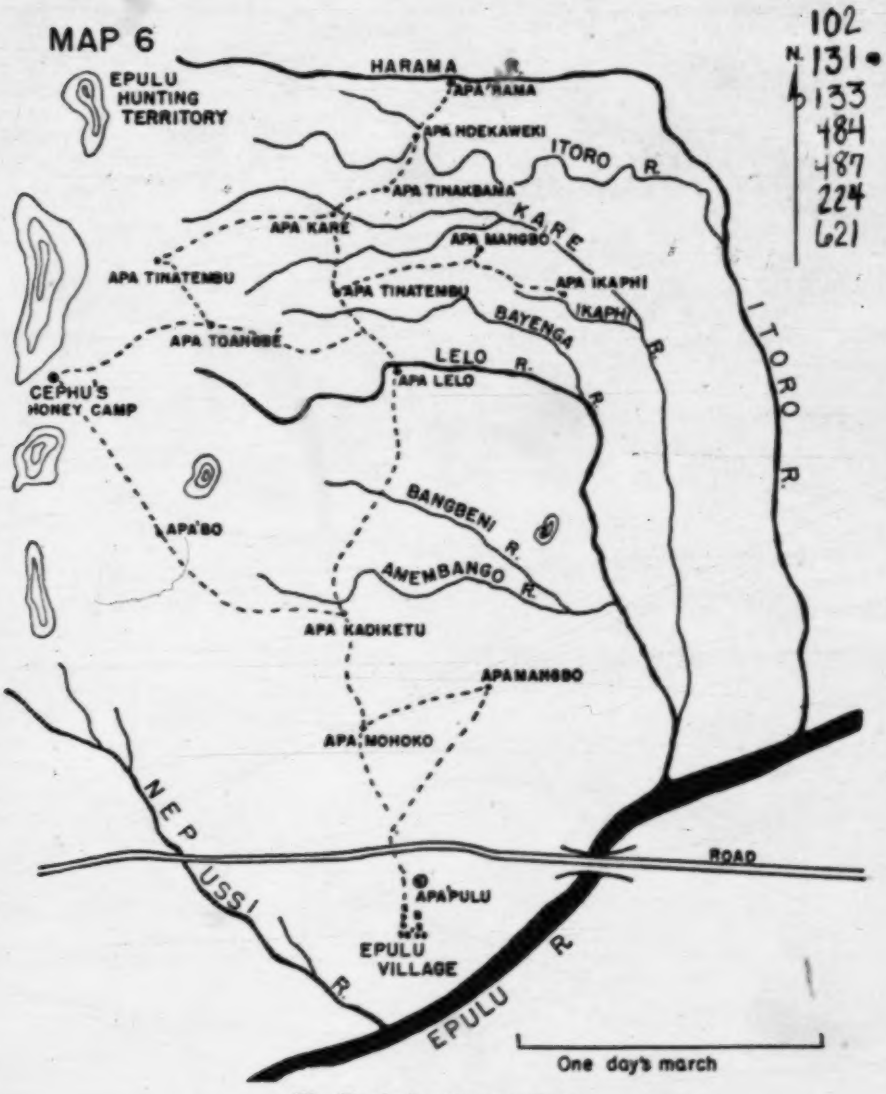
102
131
133
361




*Boundaries of Ituri Forest and of Mbuti settlement.*

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti






*The Epulu hunting territory.*

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

# 1

# The World of the Forest

IN THE NORTHEAST CORNER of the Belgian Congo, almost exactly in the middle of the map of Africa, . . . lies the Ituri Forest, a vast expanse of dense, damp and inhospitable-looking darkness. Here is the heart of Stanley's Dark Continent, the country he loved and hated, the scene of his ill-fated expedition to relieve Emin Pasha, an expedition costing hundreds of lives and imposing almost unbearable hardships on the survivors, who trekked across the great forest not once, but three times, losing more lives each time through fighting, sickness and desertion.

Anyone who has stood in the silent emptiness of a tropical rain

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



000 the sands, beating right up to the first line of tall, waving palm trees. Then you climb gently inland to the rolling hills of Nigeria, lightly wooded in places, but for the most part open and fertile. When you cross into the Cameroons there is an abrupt change. You pass steeply up into a massive range of mountains, through a narrow but dense belt of forest, and climb still higher until you are above tree line.

The road is appalling, covered with loose stones and boulders, with a gradient as much as one in four in places, deeply scoured with gulleys made by the heavy rains pouring off the mountainside. The road twists and turns until you lose all sense of direction, but at the top there is an open, flat stretch of grassland, and at the far side of that, in the French Cameroons, you find yourself faced with a descent as uncomfortable as the climb on the British side. But here, instead of looking down on rich farmland, open and sunny, you look out over a vast sea of dense, shimmering tree tops, so dark they are almost black. On all sides this ocean of forest stretches for as far as you can see, quiet and peaceful, asking only to be left undisturbed, or at least approached in peace. But the darkness also carries a threat, a warning to outsiders that they would do well to stay away. The same darkness welcomes those who understand, and there is no feeling quite the same as the refreshing coolness of the first shadows cast by the leafy giants at the forest edge, after years away from its shade and shelter.

131 From there on, the forest stretches east and south, silent and aloof,
133 for thousands of miles. To the west the Atlantic is only a short distance away; to the east the forest reaches all the way to the Mountains of the Moon. It is still with you when you cross the Ubangi Chari River, possessively covering the land right down to the water's edge. On the far side of that great river there is still another thousand miles before you reach the river Aruwimi, the wide and proud tributary of the even mightier Congo. After a few hundred miles the Aruwimi becomes less wide but more tempestuous and turbulent,

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4 Mbuti



and its name changes to the Ituri. This is where the forest becomes the home of the BaMbuti, all the way through to its easternmost fringe, north as far as it is dense enough to cast its protective shade, and for unknown hundreds of miles to the south, where it is still unexplored. This was the home of the Pygmies thousands of years before Europeans thought of Africa itself as anything much more than a myth.

To be back was wonderful, but the changes at Camp Putnam were so drastic that I wondered if I had done the right thing in returning. Now that Pat was dead the name of the district had been changed to Epulu, the name of the river that ran past his old home. And more than the name was changed. A few hundred yards on, past the turning to the old village of Camp Putnam, the road crossed the river by a rickety wooden bridge. The bridge was as rickety as ever, but the forest on either side had been cut down, and backing onto what had once been Pat's estate was an ugly modern motel, built by an enterprising Belgian who hoped to attract tourists. The main attraction was that on the other side of the road the government had established a *Station de Chasse* for the capture of forest animals, particularly okapi, and for the training of forest elephants. Between these two innovations down by the bridge and the old entrance to Camp Putnam stretched the mud houses of the workers, with a few tiny African stores and an establishment proudly calling itself Hotel de Bière. The village of Camp Putnam remained unaltered. Even the old mud mansion still stood.

Not only the changed appearance of Epulu was disconcerting; so was the fact that this new community was attracting Pygmy labor, particularly since Pygmies could be paid even less than other tribes. I found that several of my old friends were working either at the Animal Station or the motel, buying their food with money at the local stores, instead of freely roaming the forest hunting and gathering for their needs. One of them, a youth called Kenge, had

## THE MAKING OF CAMP LELO

BaNgwana are the most disliked of all the neighboring Negro tribes, and among the Pygmies they are derided particularly because of their slow, ungainly gait, and as being the least able to walk in the forest as you should be able to walk—swiftly, silently, and easily.

Kenge was full of surprises. In spite of the apparent sophistication evidenced by his attachment to Western clothes and scented soap, he still knew his way about the forest better than most Pygmies, and he certainly had a sharper eye for game. We stopped several times while he and another youth stalked carefully up to a tree where they had seen something. Each time they shot their arrows and stood poised on the balls of their feet, silent and motionless, only to relax and clap their hands in disgust and shake their heads as they explained to each other why they had missed. And each time all I could see of the bird or monkey was a shaking of the branches as it fled in fright.

After about two hours we came to Apa Kadiketu—the Camp of Kadiketu. Nobody was sure who or what Kadiketu was, but that was what the spot had always been called. This was where I had first lived in a Pygmy camp, and it was strange to pass through the same place now. There was not a sign of a hut; just the faintest outline of what had been a campsite and a slight tangle of undergrowth showing that some clearing had once been done. Kadiketu was not quite halfway to the Lelo River, and we stopped there for a few minutes to have a smoke.

But even while we were resting, squatting on our bundles, Kenge and his friends were looking around. Before we left they made a quick foraging expedition and returned in as much time as it took me to hitch up my bundle and try to find some way of fastening the tump line so that it relieved my aching shoulders. A typewriter and a load of paper and notebooks wrapped up inside a thick blanket made the load awkward and heavy. Each of my companions had handfuls of mushrooms, great fluffy pink things, fresh and firm.